The Happy Prince

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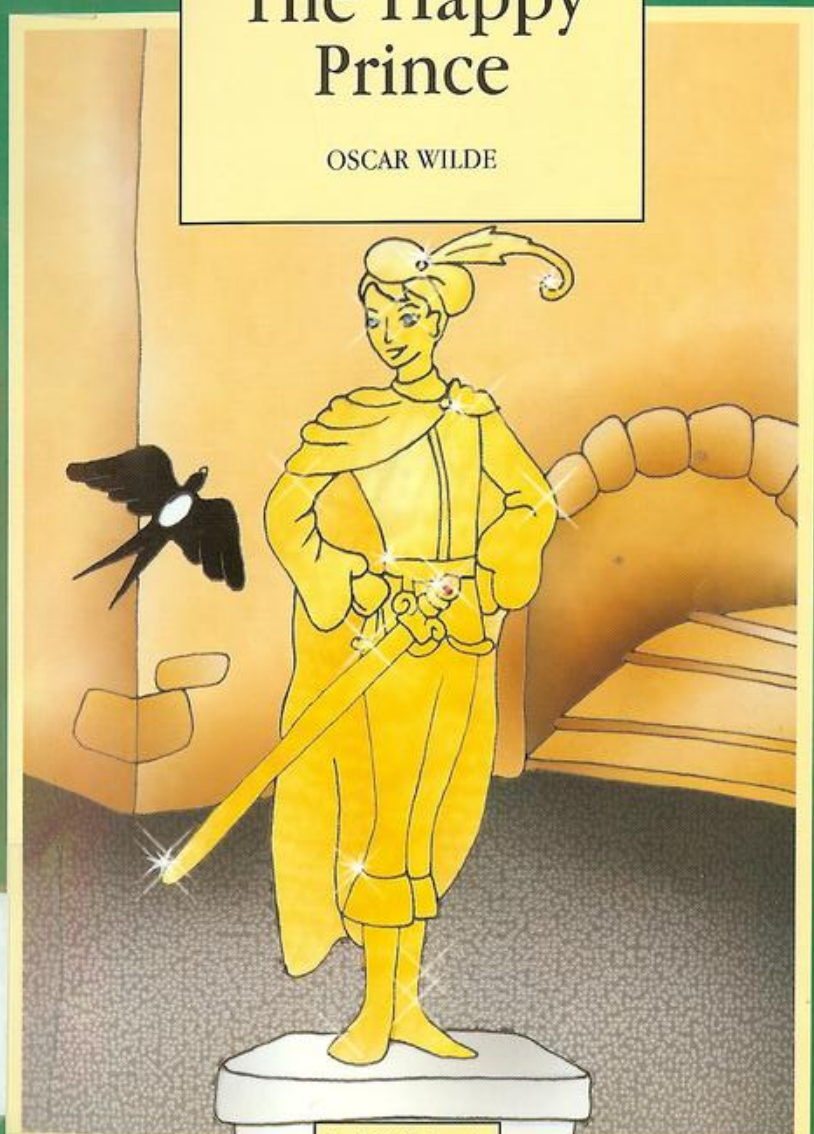
The Happy Prince

OSCAR WILDE



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Chapter 1

There is a big city in the north of Europe. In this city, there is a big square. A column is in the middle of that square. A very beautiful statue stands on top of that big marble column.

The statue is the Happy Prince. He is a very beautiful prince. There are leaves of gold all over his body. He has got two bright sapphires instead of eyes. At the top of his sword is a large red ruby. He is a magnificent sight.

People walk in the square and look at the beautiful statue of the Happy Prince.

"Aren't we lucky?" they say. "We have a beautiful statue in our city."

Chapter 2

There is a little Swallow by the river. He is in love with a beautiful Reed. The Reed lives by the river. She is very happy.

"Please, please come to Egypt with me," says the Swallow to the Reed.

The Reed just smiles. The wind blows and she dances a little.

"Winter is coming," says the Swallow. "It is very cold here in winter."

The Reed is still smiling but she does not move.

"You are not coming with me," says the Swallow sadly. "I must go now. It is getting cold," he says.

He is late. There are no other swallows left.

"Goodbye my beautiful Reed," he says. Then he leaves. He flies south. Egypt is in the south.

CHAPTER 3

The Swallow flies all day. He is tired and he wants to sleep. He flies over the square in the big city and he looks at the beautiful statue high above the city. He really likes that place.

"This is a good place," he thinks. "I can sleep here."

The little bird lands at the feet of the statue.

"You are very beautiful," he says to the statue. "Now I must sleep. I am very tired. Goodnight."

He puts his head under his wing and closes his eyes. He is about to fall asleep when a drop of water falls on him.

"What's that?" he asks, "Rain?"

Then he looks up. The Happy Prince is crying.

"Why are you crying?" he asks the beautiful statue of the Happy Prince.

CHAPTER 1

The Happy Prince is crying. His eyes are full of tears. The tears are running down his golden cheeks. The little Swallow is amazed.

"Who are you?" he asks.

"I am the Happy Prince," answers the statue.

"Why are you crying then?" asks the Swallow. "I am all wet."

"I'm sorry," says the Prince, "but I am very sad."

"Are you always sad?" asks the little Swallow.

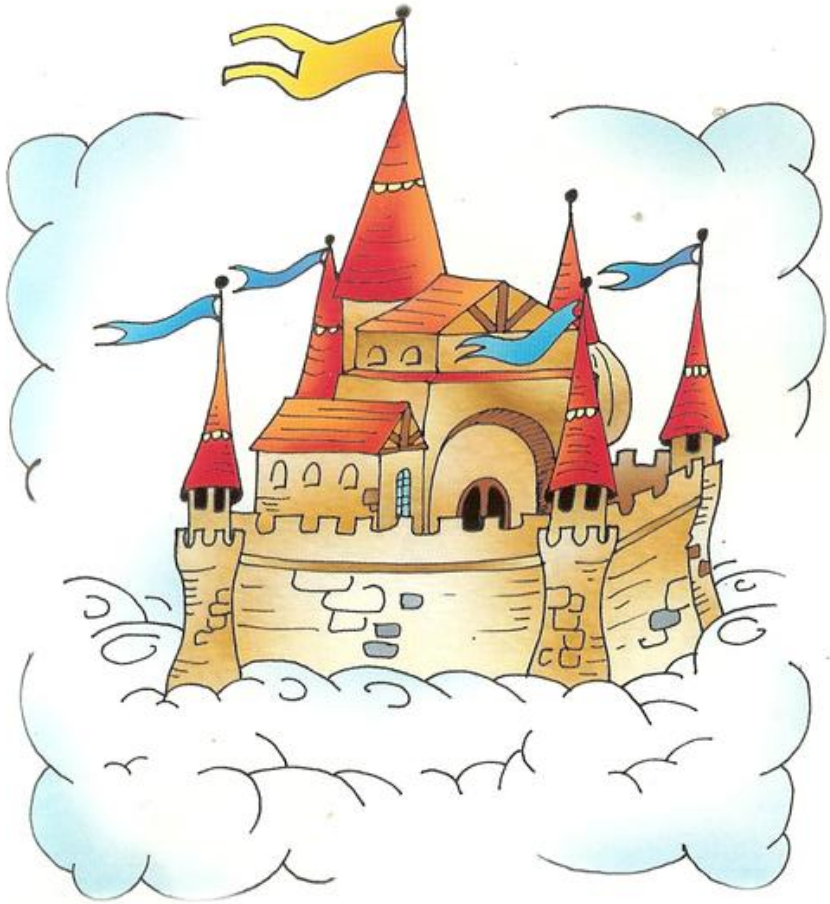
"When I was alive I was never sad," answers the statue. "I lived in a beautiful palace. No one was sad. Everyone was happy."

"What happened?" asks the Swallow.

"I grew old and died," answers the Prince.

"That is very sad," says the Swallow, "but now you are up here. You can look at your beautiful city down there."

"I know," says the Happy Prince and he begins crying again.



CHAPTER 5

"Oh, please don't cry," says the Swallow. "You are making me very wet and very sad." The Swallow is a soft-hearted bird.

"Maybe you can help me," says the Happy Prince.

"How can I help you?" asks the Swallow. "I am just a poor little bird. You are a beautiful solid gold statue."

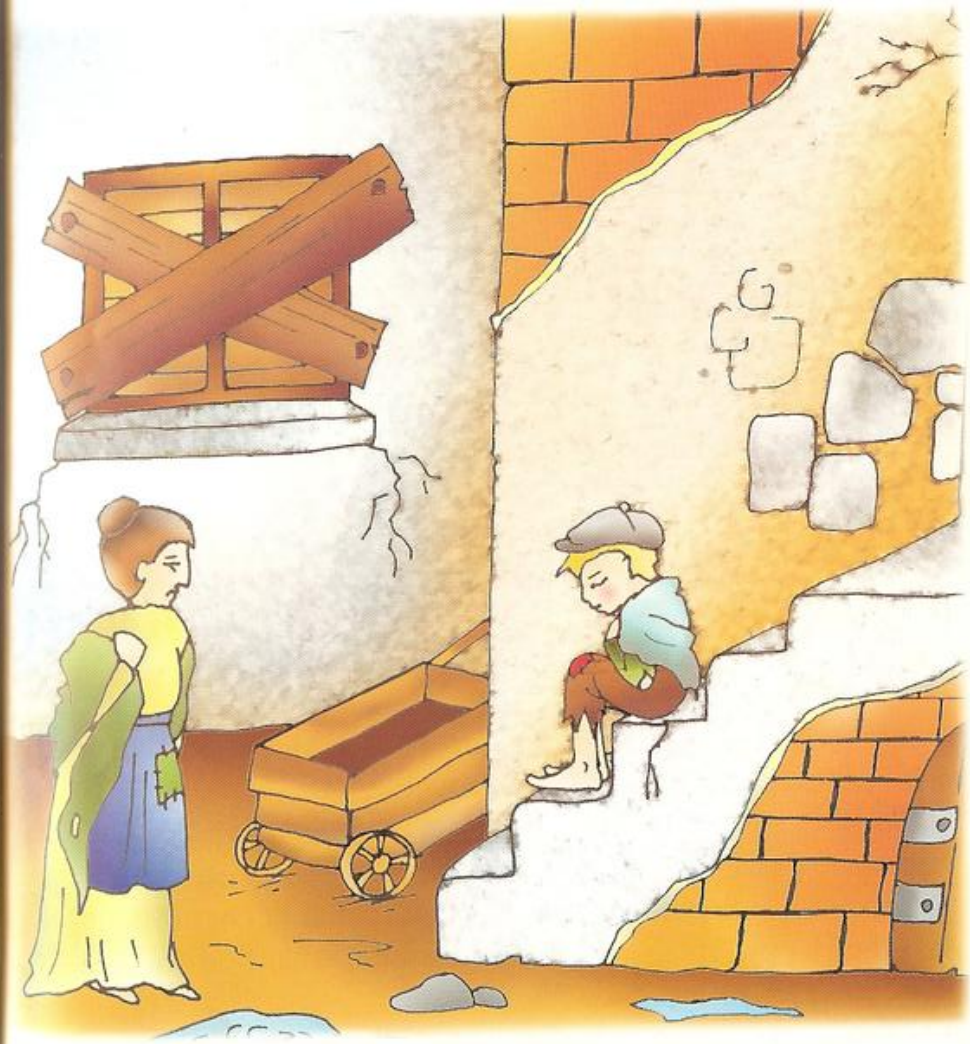
"I am not solid gold," says the Happy Prince. "My body is made of lead. There is lead under the gold leaves."

"But why are you so sad?" asks the Swallow.

"When I was alive I was happy all the time. Everything was beautiful," says the Happy Prince. "Now, I am high above the city and I can see the beautiful things, but I can also see the misery."

The Swallow feels very sorry for the Happy Prince.

"How can I help him?" he thinks. "It is getting cold and I must fly to Egypt."



CHAPTER 6

"Look," says the Happy Prince, "far away over there. There is a poor house in a little street. I can see a woman. She is sitting at a table. Her face is thin and sad. Her hands are rough and red because she is sewing all day long."

The little Swallow looks, too. He can see the woman in the poor house. He can also see the boy. The boy is very sick. He has a fever.

"The boy wants oranges, but his mother hasn't got any money," says the Happy Prince. "Please, little Swallow, can you see the ruby in my sword?"

"Yes I can," answers the Swallow. "It's beautiful."

"Please, take it to the poor woman," says the Happy Prince. "I cannot move. I am stuck here."

"But, I must go to Egypt," says the Swallow. "My friends are waiting for me. It is nice and warm there."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," says the Prince. "Please stay one night with me. Please be my messenger. The sick boy is thirsty and his mother is very sad."

"I'm sorry," says the Swallow, "but it is cold here. I can die from the cold. I must go."

CHAPTER 7

The Swallow is going to leave. He opens his wings. The Happy Prince looks very sad. The Swallow closes them again.

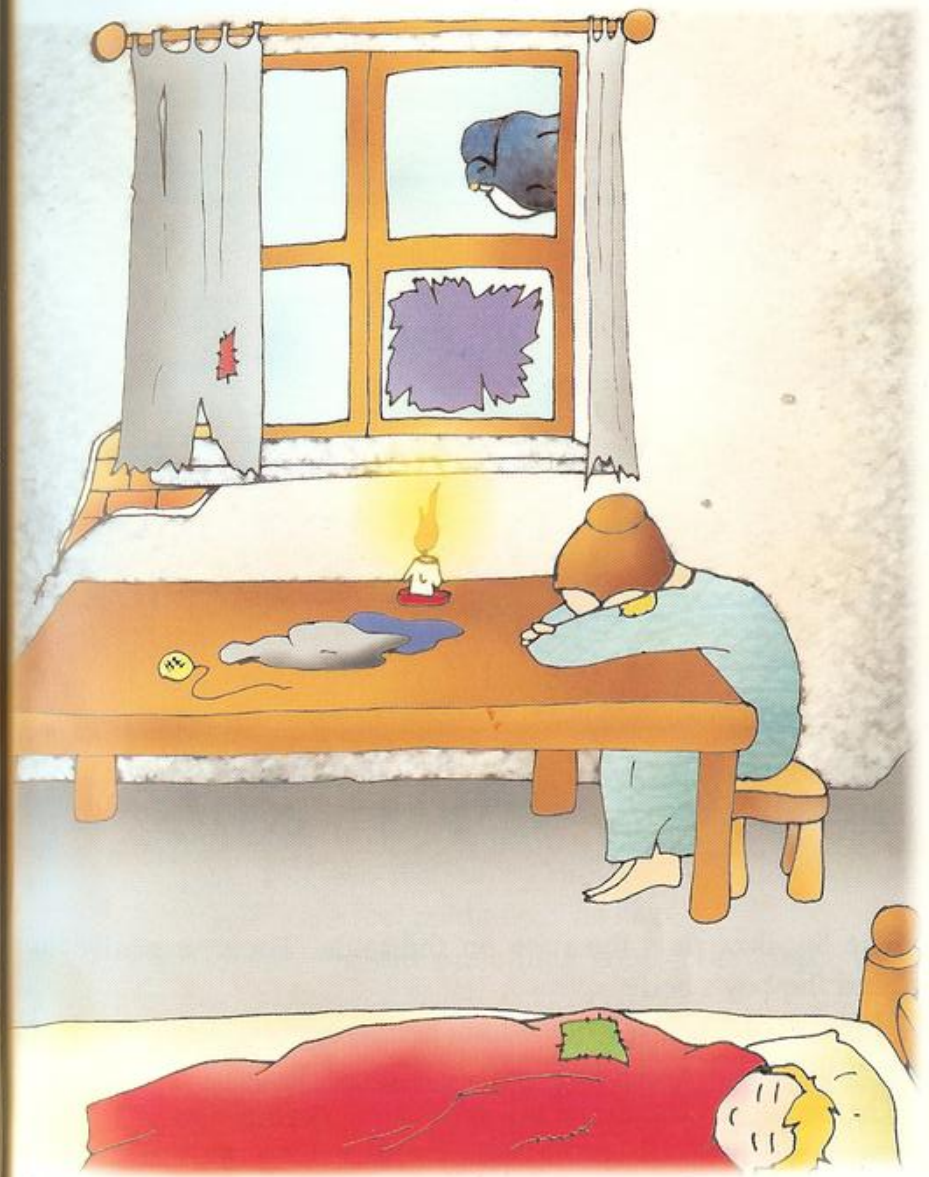
"All right," he says. "I will stay one night."

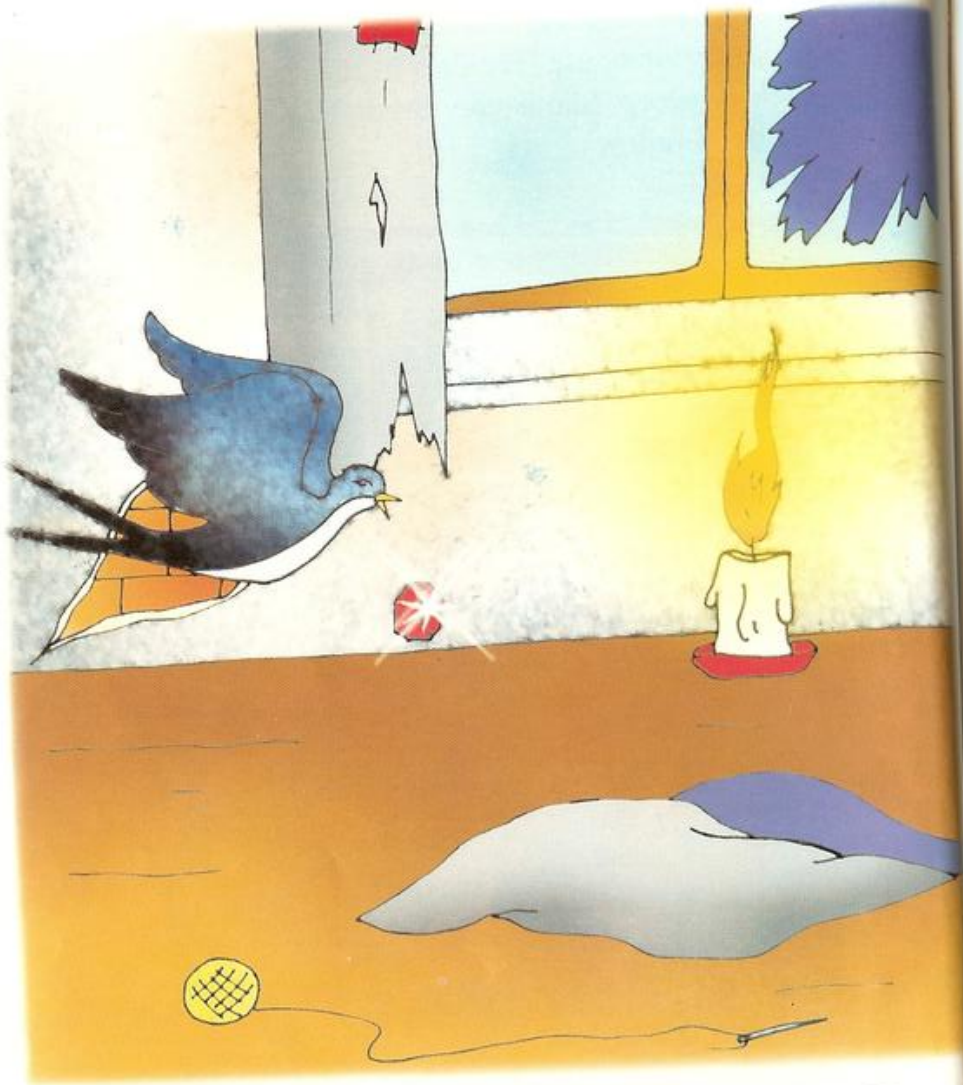
"Thank you little Swallow," says the Prince.

Then the little Swallow takes the ruby from the Prince's sword. He holds it in his beak. He flies over the city. He flies over the cathedral. He flies over the palace. He hears music and laughter.

"The people are having a party there," he thinks.

He flies over the river. He can see the lights of the ships. At last he reaches the poor house. He flies in through the window. The poor woman is asleep. She is very tired. The boy is very sick. He doesn't see the Swallow.





The Swallow puts the ruby on the table. Then he gently flies around the boy's bed.

"I feel cool," says the boy, "I am getting better." Then he sleeps peacefully.

The Swallow flies out of the window. "I did my job," he thinks. "Now, I'm going back to the Happy Prince."

CHAPTER 8

The kind little Swallow flies back to the statue of the Happy Prince. He sits at the Prince's feet and smiles.

"I did my job," he tells the Happy Prince.

"It's strange, I don't feel cold now," he says.

"That is because you did something good," the Happy Prince tells him.

"Now, I must sleep," the Swallow says.

He puts his head under his wing and sleeps. He is very tired. The Prince smiles. He is happy again. In the morning the Swallow wakes up. He is also happy.

"Tonight I am going to Egypt," he says. He flies all over the city. He says goodbye to all the Sparrows. They are surprised.

"Why are you still here?" a Sparrow asks him.

"I am leaving tonight," the Swallow answers.

"Bon Voyage pretty one," says the Sparrow. Sparrows think Swallows are beautiful.

When the moon rises the Swallow flies to the statue of the Happy Prince.

"Goodbye," he says, "I'm leaving for Egypt."

The statue looks sad again.

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," says the Happy Prince. "Please stay with me one more night."

CHAPTER 9

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," continues the Happy Prince, "far away across the city I can see a poor young man. He is in a garret. He is writing a play, but he is hungry because he has no money. He needs help."

"I will stay one night more," says the little Swallow. He is a kind bird. "Shall I take him another ruby?"

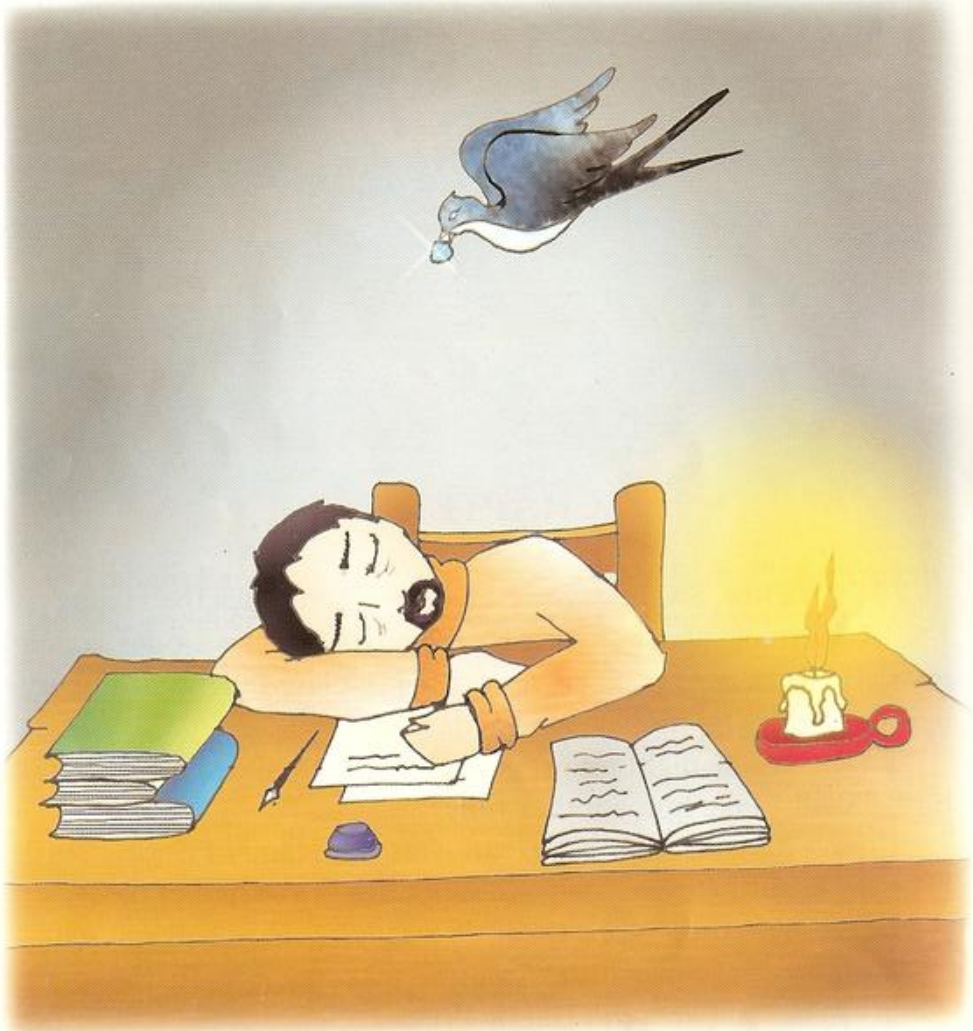
"I don't have another ruby," answers the Happy Prince, "but I have my beautiful eyes. They are sapphires. Take one of those."

"I cannot do that," cries the little Swallow, "How will you see?"

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow take my eye to the poor hungry man," answers the Happy Prince.

So, the Swallow takes the Prince's eye. He flies over the city. He arrives at the young man's garret. There is a hole in the roof. The Swallow goes into the garret. The young man's eyes are closed. He is thinking about a hot meal. He does not see the bird.

"What's that?" he asks when he opens his eyes. He looks at the sapphire. "It is a sapphire the colour of a beautiful pair of eyes," he says, "I can buy some food now."



CHAPTER 10

The little Swallow wakes up the next morning. "Tonight I am going to Egypt," he thinks.

When evening comes he flies to the statue of the Happy Prince.

"Goodbye my dear Prince," he says. "I am leaving for Egypt."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," says the Prince. "Please stay with me one more night."

"It is winter," says the Swallow, "I must go. In Egypt the sun is warm on the green palm trees."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," says the Prince. "Look in the square below. There is a little poor girl. She is selling matches. She has dropped her matches in the gutter. She will have no money. Her father will beat her."

"I can see her," answers the Swallow. "She is crying."

"Take my other eye," says the Prince, "and give it to her and her father will not beat her."

"I can't do that," cries the little Swallow. "You will be blind."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," says the Prince. "Take my eye to the poor little girl."

So, the Swallow takes the Prince's other eye. He flies down to the square. He puts the beautiful sapphire in the little girl's hand.

"This is a beautiful piece of glass," cries the little girl and she runs home with it.

CHAPTER 11

The little Swallow flies back up to the top of the marble column. He looks at the Prince. He is very sad.

"You are blind now," he says to the Prince, "I will stay with you for ever."

"No, little Swallow," says the blind Prince. "You must go to Egypt."

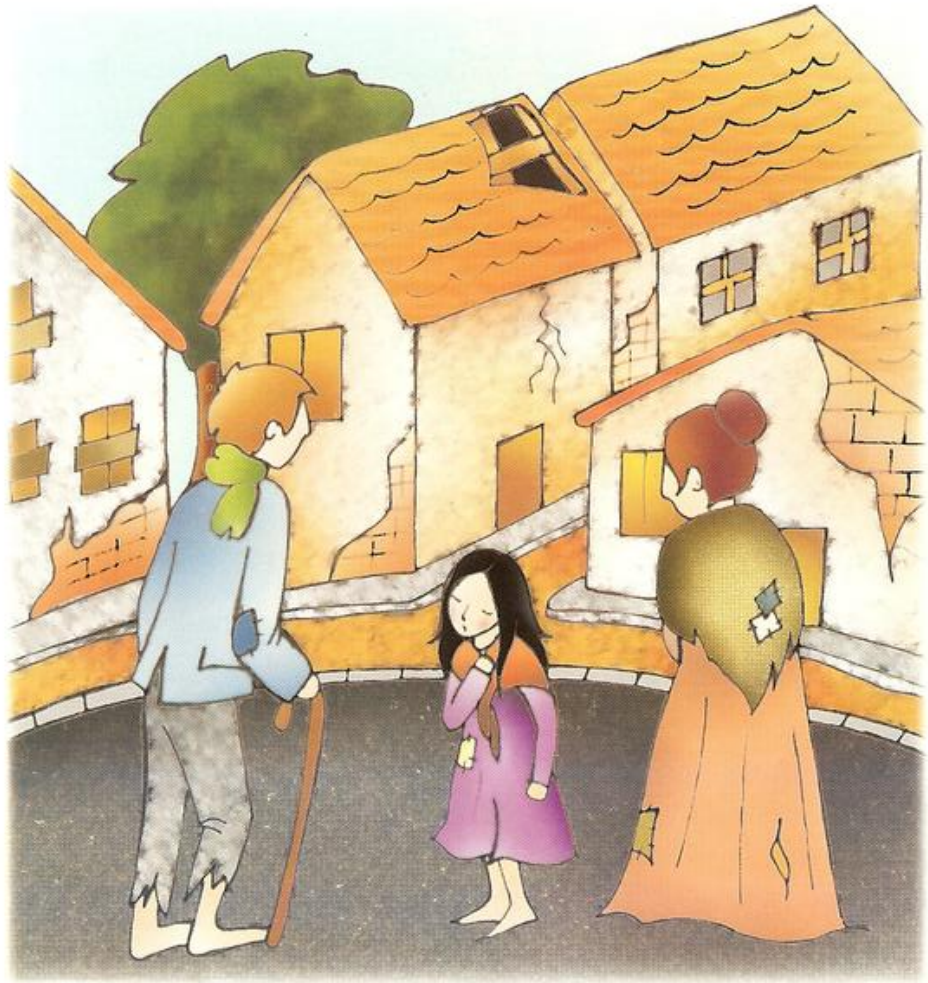
"No, I will always stay with you," says the Swallow, "and sleep at your feet."

The next day, the Swallow sits on the Prince's shoulder. "Now, I am your eyes," he says.

He tells the Prince many wonderful stories about the birds in Egypt and the fish in the Nile. He tells him about the wonderful Pyramids and the Sphinx. He tells him about the green snake that sleeps in a palm tree.

"Dear little Swallow," says the Prince, "you tell me about marvellous things, but what else can you see?"

"There are many poor people in this city," says the little Swallow. "What can we do?" he asks.



"Dear little Swallow," says the Prince, "take the gold leaves from my body. Give them to the poor people."

So, everyday the Swallow flies over the city and takes the gold to the poor.

The days pass and it is getting colder and colder.

Finally, all the gold is gone.

CHAPTER 12

The Swallow is very cold. It is a very bad winter, but the Swallow stays with the Prince. The Prince is not beautiful anymore. He is dull and grey.

The little Swallow is very sick. He knows he is going to die. He flies onto the Prince's shoulder.

"Goodbye dear Prince," he says. "I want to kiss you before I die." He kisses the Prince and falls dead at his feet. Then, a strange thing happens. There is a huge cracking sound. The Prince's leaden heart splits in two.

Early the next morning the Mayor is walking in the square. He sees the dead bird and the ugly statue.

"Remove this mess" he orders, "take the statue and the bird to the city dump."

The street cleaners, remove the dead Swallow and the old grey statue.

They throw the bird on top of the city dump and take the statue to a foundry. The workers at the foundry melt the statue.

"Look at this," says a worker at the foundry, "The statue's heart won't melt in the furnace."

"Well, throw it away," says another worker. "Take it to the dump."

"Bring me the two most precious things in the city," says God to one of his angels.

The angel goes to the city and returns with the heart and the dead Swallow.

"You chose the right things," says God. "This little bird will sing in my garden for ever and the Happy Prince will be happy again in my city of gold."